

Scrutiny Report

Review of the new grounds maintenance contract

Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger
Communities)

November 2012



Contents

	Page(s)
1. Introduction and Scope	3-4
2. Conclusions and Recommendations	5-15
3. Desired Outcomes and Recommendation Summary	16-17
4. Evidence	18 -19



Introduction and Scope

Introduction

1. As the second largest Metropolitan District, Leeds has one of the largest local authority grounds maintenance contracts in the UK.
2. Grounds maintenance continues to be a service area that generates high public interest and often is an issue raised by local residents with Members of the Council. It therefore remains an area of priority for Scrutiny.
3. During 2009, the former Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board requested to be involved in overseeing the procurement process for the new grounds maintenance contract that was to be implemented in 2011. This was to ensure that earlier scrutiny recommendations, as well as any other lessons learned, were being taken on board during this process.
4. Following this piece of work, the Scrutiny Board published a report in January 2010 setting out its findings and recommendations.
5. The new contract was awarded to Continental Landscapes Ltd in August 2011. After following a detailed contract mobilisation plan and induction programme, Continental staff began work on site on 5th January 2012.
6. However, in June 2012, the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board received a request for Scrutiny in relation to the new Grounds Maintenance Contract.
7. Councillor Wadsworth had requested the Scrutiny Board to review the initial

delivery of service standards, with particular focus on the maintenance of grass around street furniture and sheltered housing areas; dealing with grass arisings; and communication links with Elected Members and the public.

8. As the Scrutiny Board had already expressed a wish to monitor progress this year in relation to grounds maintenance, we were happy to accept this request.

Scope of the review

9. In taking forward this piece of work, we agreed to hold an initial working group meeting on 1st August 2012 to discuss the key issues that had arisen during the initial stages of contract delivery, the reasons for these and any actions taken to help address such issues in the future.
10. All members of the Scrutiny Board were invited to take part in the working group meeting. Councillor Wadsworth was also invited to explain why he had brought this matter to the attention of the Scrutiny Board. The meeting also involved representatives from Continental; Environmental Services; the ALMOs; Locality Managers; Parks and Countryside and the Executive Board Member for Environment.
11. A summary of the key issues raised during this working group meeting was reported to the full Board in September. At that stage, it was agreed that further work was needed to address the issues that had been raised. A second working group meeting was therefore held on 1st October 2012. Again, all members of



Introduction and Scope

the Scrutiny Board were invited to take part in the meeting. The meeting also involved representatives from Environmental Services and Parks and Countryside.

12. After the findings of this working group meeting were reported to the full Scrutiny Board in October, we agreed to conclude this review and report on our findings and recommendations in relation to the new grounds maintenance contract.

Anticipated Service Impact

13. The recommendations arising from this review aim to assist the Council in providing a grounds maintenance service that maximises available resources, delivers value for money and best meets the needs of residents across the city.
14. The desired outcomes linked to individual recommendations are also summarised later in the report.

Equality and Diversity

15. The Equality Improvement Priorities 2011 to 2015 have been developed to ensure that the council meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. The priorities will help the council to identify work and activities that help to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity to achieve its ambition to be the best City in the UK.

16. Within the current Grounds Maintenance Contract Specification, there is a dedicated section in relation to equality and diversity and the expectations placed upon the Contractor to comply with the Equality Act 2010.
17. Equality and diversity issues have been considered throughout this review. The evidence submitted and the topics debated have not highlighted that a particular equality group are treated less fairly.
18. Where a Scrutiny Board has made recommendations and these are agreed, the individual, organisation or group responsible for implementation or delivery should give due regard to equality and diversity and where appropriate an equality impact assessment will be carried out.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Effective mobilisation of the new contract.

19. Once the new grounds maintenance contact had been awarded, a detailed contract mobilisation action plan was put in place to ensure the smooth mobilisation of the new contract. This was overseen by a Mobilisation Team with representatives from each of the internal clients, including the Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs), Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation (BITMO), Highways and Transportation Service, with support from Procurement, Environmental Services and Parks and Countryside.
20. Continental started the contract on 3rd January 2012 and provided a detailed induction programme for all front line staff, regardless of whether they were new or had been transferred from the previous contractor.
21. Following the induction programme, staff began work on site on 5th January 2012, completing the remainder of the winter maintenance programme handed over by the outgoing contractor.
22. Overall, we believe that the mobilisation process for the commencement of the new contract had been successful.

Identifying and maintaining all pieces of land effectively.

23. As Leeds has one of the largest local authority grounds maintenance contracts in the UK, we acknowledge that variations to the asset management register will inevitably occur. In view of this, there remains a formal process within the contract to ensure that work can be varied in and out as required. Variations to the asset types need to be agreed between the relevant client and the contractor within 5 working days and signed acceptance forms completed.
24. Whilst acknowledging that this process is managed by the grounds maintenance team, we learned that staffing issues and high volumes of work had initially led to a backlog of variations. However, we are pleased to note that additional support has now been provided and variation orders are being recorded and monitored more closely to ensure that an acceptable processing time is maintained.
25. We were also very pleased to learn that Continental has been particularly helpful with this issue and responded to requests for work in advance of the variation orders being raised.
26. However, an issue that continues to be raised by Scrutiny relates to the identification and management of miscellaneous or 'orphan' land.
27. The Council is responsible for providing the most up-to-date spatial mapping information to the contractor. Previous scrutiny reviews have



Conclusions and Recommendations

debated the likelihood of ever achieving 100% accuracy at all times and concluded that there remains a need to continue to have a clear mechanism included within the contract specification to effectively manage the incorporation of any new site locations.

28. Whilst appreciating the importance of ensuring that assets are correctly identified and assigned to the appropriate client, such processes should not hinder the delivery of the service, particularly as the public is not likely to make such distinctions and will simply hold the Council to account for this service.
29. However, many of the problems arise in dealing with unregistered land where the ownership is not clear and requires investigation by officers. These sites need to be investigated speedily to clarify responsibilities so that private land-owners can be approached by council enforcement officers.
30. The former Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board also reached this conclusion in January 2010 and recommended that consideration be given to the feasibility of setting aside a separate budget for maintaining pieces of orphan land until ownership matters are resolved.
31. The need for funding to undertake maintenance to sites of concern to local residents and the general public was noted within a report to Executive Board on 22nd June 2010 and gave an update on the procurement of the new contract. This was valued at £60k for year 1 of the contract (2012/13) and

£20K for each subsequent year. However, this funding was not included in the budget settlement for the contract for 2012/13.

32. This remains to be a key problem within the grounds maintenance service and so we urge again that this is given serious consideration. We believe that this could be achieved through efficiencies within the contract monitoring process, which we have addressed separately within our report.

Recommendation 1

That the Director of Resources and Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods establish a separate budget to enable the Grounds Maintenance Team to schedule immediate grounds maintenance work on miscellaneous grassed areas pending clarification of land ownership and formal allocation of future maintenance responsibility.

Addressing traffic management issues for Primary Network routes.

33. Primary Network routes can be defined as any grass adjacent to the Principal 'A' roads within Leeds Metropolitan District Boundary. These roads are generally for fast moving long distance traffic with little frontage or pedestrian traffic, with speed limits in excess of 40mph. The contract specification therefore states that it is essential that during such works, the



Conclusions and Recommendations

Contractor liaises with the relevant Highways Network Management Officers as some sites may need to be completed outside normal working hours (i.e. between 9.30am and 3.30pm, evenings and weekends).

34. Primary networks are divided into two Classes;

Class 1 – The majority of the primary network grass cutting will be carried out on 6 occasions between March and October.

Class 2 – The remainder of the primary network grass cutting will be carried out on 3 occasions between March and October.

35. Both Class 1 and Class 2 grass is to be cut back to a height of 100 mm.
36. Grass in these areas will typically be on the verges or central reservations of dual carriageways and other high speed roads. It is therefore essential that the Contractor works within the relevant guidelines (Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual). All personnel employed by / or sub-contracted to the company carrying out the works, which are on or adjacent to the highway network, must also have the appropriate training and certification required by the National Highway Sector Scheme.
37. We learned that the first scheduled cut of this category of grass was delayed and that the quality of service delivered across the city was inconsistent. The quality issue was partly due to this delayed start and the fact that Continental used sub-contractors. In addition, there was

also a delay in Continental providing cut information which made monitoring difficult. The perceived quality of service provided was therefore based on complaints. There was also a delay in agreeing traffic management protocols that affected grass cutting on high speed roads that required traffic management arrangements to ensure that cutting was carried out safely. The locations affected were as follows:

- Ring Road, Weetwood.
- M1/A650 junction (J41)
- Ring Road, Seacroft (70mph section)
- A63 Selby Road
- Ring Road, Beeston

38. However, we are pleased to note that following discussions with Continental, a mechanism is now in place to ensure that the grass is cut at a reasonable interval and that timely cut update information is received from the sub-contractors and passed onto the Council. It was also reported that Highways Services have reviewed each location specified to be cut 6 times per year and, where appropriate, reclassified to 13 times per year. This initial work was carried out in February 2012 and has continued to date.
39. In addition, traffic management arrangements are also now established and future cuts scheduled. Where road closures are necessary to conduct such works, it was felt that this needed to be considered further to ensure smooth traffic flows and minimised disturbance to residents. In doing so, we learned that Continental agreed to the Council's street cleaning teams using their road closures, which



Conclusions and Recommendations

has worked particularly well on Stanningley Bypass.

40. The significant improvement in the co-ordination of arrangements between Continental, Highways Services, street cleaning teams and the grounds maintenance team to reduce traffic management problems is very much welcomed.

Maintaining grass and other growth around street furniture.

41. The contract specification states that 'the Contractor must maintain the grass and any other growth around street furniture and any other obstacles cutting to the same height as the surrounding grass'. However, we noted that there have been complaints regarding staff failing to trim around street furniture where required.
42. Continental highlighted that where mistakes had been made, this primarily involved new staff within new areas and that this would be rectified with training.
43. We acknowledge that Continental remain committed to train its staff to NVQ Level 2 in amenity horticulture and provide opportunities for a number of apprenticeships.
44. In accordance with the contract specification, Continental also acknowledged that it is encouraged that they deploy localised grounds maintenance teams in order to nurture ownership and pride in the quality of service delivered and that they also remain fully committed to this.

Effective maintenance of sheltered housing complexes.

45. We acknowledge that the cut quality around some of the ALMO sheltered complexes had been a key issue. This was linked to the fact that whilst the frequency of cut is the same as standard amenity grass i.e 13 times per year, many residents believed that it should be more frequent.
46. We were therefore pleased to learn that the ALMOs have now reviewed their sheltered housing complexes and, where appropriate, have increased the frequency of grass cutting up to the end of this grass cutting season. As a result, Continental has established dedicated teams to carry out this work and to date are achieving a full cut in a week. Whilst acknowledging that the full benefits of this are still to be reviewed, we welcome the approach taken.

Dealing with grass arisings effectively.

47. Another common service quality issue relates to grass arisings not being cleared from hard surfaces following grass cutting.
48. The contract specification states that all arisings will be left evenly distributed across the plot. All grass clippings resulting from operations falling on paths and other hard surfaces including driveways, are also to be dispersed back on to the grassed area. In particular, grass



Conclusions and Recommendations

arisings must not be blown onto the carriageway. Linked to this, it was also acknowledged that the public perception is that grass arisings should be collected.

recognised that reduced grass arisings could only realistically be achieved by an increase in the frequency of cut.

49. The ALMOs explained that this is the second highest complaint reason and that when the grass is long and wet, this becomes more of an issue with the public. The staff at Continental also receive complaints from the public on this matter, despite the fact that the collection of grass arisings has never featured in any Leeds Council grounds maintenance contract. It was therefore felt that this needed to be communicated more clearly to the public. The general issue of communication is addressed later in this report.
50. In terms of dispersing grass cuttings from hard services back on to grassed areas, this is usually done by blowing the grass. We noted that when grass is short and dry, it usually gets blown away on its own. However, when it is long and wet, the staff are required to disperse it themselves. Continental have carried out further training with staff on this issue and, where appropriate, taken formal action. Dispersing grass from the highway is a particularly dangerous task and therefore Continental continues to hold discussions with health and safety on this matter.
51. We discussed the benefits of the first cut of the season being a 'cut and collect' to reduce subsequent arisings. However, it was recognised that operationally in terms of crew and machinery and the additional cost, this made this prohibitive. We therefore

That the frequency of maintenance operations is fit for purpose.

52. Within the contract specification, the preferred option for delivery of the grounds maintenance service is to maintain all amenity grass to a cut height of 25mm. In doing so, the contractor is required to undertake 13 cuts in any one growing season.
53. However, it was noted that the weather at the start of the growing season this year was a significant factor in causing operational difficulties and perceived quality issues. This unusually wet warm weather had caused a prolonged 'flush' of grass growth slowing down mowing speed and creating a large volume of grass arisings after each cut, which was often considered unsightly. In addition, the periods of extreme wet weather also prevented grass cutting on some days and made access to some areas difficult or impossible.
54. The extended cut frequency caused by the extreme weather conditions had allowed significant growth between cuts, thereby adding to existing pressures. However, it was acknowledged that where genuine mistakes are being made, these would need to be addressed urgently with appropriate training.



Conclusions and Recommendations

55. We noted that Continental would like to aspire to a two calendar weekly grass cut frequency (16 cuts in one season) to achieve a better quality of cut. Whilst this has not yet been achieved, we learned that Continental has employed an additional three cutting teams (totaling a local workforce of 108 staff) and have also offered overtime working to their staff to try and increase the cut frequency to two calendar weeks.
56. We are aware that the opportunity does exist for Parish and Town Councils to procure additional cuts for specific areas should they wish to. However, in view of Continental's own aspirations to deliver a two calendar weekly grass cut frequency, this prompted questions about whether the current frequency of cuts was sufficient and highlighted a need for this to be reviewed.
57. It was reported that the wet weather conditions have also encouraged unusual levels of weed growth in many of the shrub and rose beds. In particular those strains of weeds that tend to be more tolerant to the herbicides used, for example, thistles and nettles have become an issue.
58. In conjunction with Continental, we learned that a schedule of additional maintenance visits has been agreed to be completed by the end of September 2012. This will include initial manual removal of established weeds followed by an herbicide application when the weather conditions are more favourable. It was reported that Continental has also employed three additional teams to carry out this work which began in early July 2012.
59. We recognise that the current shrub bed maintenance specification that requires Continental to visit shrub beds twice per year requires revision to provide a consistently acceptable service.
60. We also discussed the relative cost effectiveness of maintaining empty shrub beds or returning to full beds/grass or other asset. In doing so, we believe that different clients would have differing views on this and therefore asset holders should consult with local Ward Members and or Parish/Town Councillors on the future of individual old shrub beds.
61. In moving this forward, we understand that discussions have already commenced with the client services to explore revision of the frequency of operations to meet 16 cuts (amenity grass) and 6 visits to shrub/rose bed profile. The indicative costs for this are in the region of an additional £259K for grass and £148k for Shrub and Rose beds. However, these figures and frequencies are subject to compliance with Contract Procedure Rules. We believe that although this is an increase in expenditure, when taken into context with the overall budgets controlled by the ALMO's and Highways this aspiration is achievable.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendation 2

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with each of the internal clients to explore a move towards an extended shrub maintenance service (6 shrub visits) and a fortnightly grass cut frequency (16 cuts in one season) in order to achieve a better quality of service.

Recommendation 3

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that asset holders consult with local Ward Members and relevant Parish and Town Councils on the future use and maintenance of old shrub beds.

Enabling a more joined up approach towards litter picking.

62. The contract specification states that 'prior to scheduled works, the contractor will remove and dispose of rubbish including leaves, rubble, litter and wind blown branches and fruits, plus anything else that the Client considers detrimental to the appearance of the site. Litter picking is particularly important and will be managed through the monitoring process'. In addition, Continental is also to ensure that litter picking and cutting is completed in the same working day for each asset.
63. However, we acknowledge that a common service quality issue relates

to litter not being removed from grassed areas prior to being cut, resulting in shredded litter. Whilst we appreciate that it is the outcome that is important, the perception from the public is that it does not make sense to try and pick up litter once it has been shredded.

64. We noted that Continental have carried out further training with staff and where appropriate, taken formal action. The Council will also continue to monitor service quality and any issue of this nature will be passed back for rectification. Failure to respond will result in contract deductions
65. We were pleased to learn that Continental also continue to work closely with the Locality Management Teams to deal with issues around litter picking as they are keen to work more effectively together in delivering a joined up service. Similar discussions around joined up working are also taking place with other partners, such as the ALMOs and Parks and Countryside.
66. We very much support this and believe that any opportunities to enable a more joined up approach towards litter picking should not be lost where the Council and City will benefit.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendation 4

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with the Head of Parks and Countryside, the internal clients, Locality Management and Continental to review existing litter picking responsibilities and opportunities for more joined up working.

That this review is undertaken immediately and an update report brought back to Scrutiny in January 2013.

would need to go through the normal procurement processes. We therefore recommend that this is pursued further.

Recommendation 5

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods reviews where any additional services provided by Continental could lead to further cost savings, with particular attention given to potential winter operations.

That this review is undertaken immediately, with an update brought back to the Scrutiny Board in January 2013.

Working together to achieve added value of service.

67. As well as litter picking services, we believe there is further added value to be gained by exploring where any additional services provided by Continental could lead to further cost savings. This would be particularly relevant to winter works, which would directly protect Continental's workforce, enabling greater service security in subsequent years.
68. We learned that Continental had already submitted a list of potential winter operations they could carry out for clients should they so wish. These included; verge reinstatements, managing verge creep and grass on pavements. It was noted that where possible and financial support is available, these services could be taken up via 'contract variations'. However, other more substantial and diverse pieces of additional work

Effective contract monitoring processes

69. Previous scrutiny reviews have maintained that the development of a robust and consistent contract monitoring process is paramount in order to achieve an effective grounds maintenance service.
70. In accordance with the current contract specification, the day to day operational contract monitoring is to be undertaken by the individual clients (ALMO's, BITMO and Highways). It also recognises that the clients have a number of Registered Tenants Groups, Town and Parish Councils, Residents Panels and individual residents who may also be involved in the day to day monitoring of any work carried out in their respective areas.
71. Monitoring of the service delivery has been carried out since 3rd January



Conclusions and Recommendations

2012. Whilst the ALMOs continue to monitor their own assets, the grounds maintenance team monitor Highways assets.

72. We noted that the aim is to ensure that a minimum of 10% of each cut is monitored, this being regarded as a statistically representative sample. To date, in excess of 10% has been achieved. Whilst it was noted that the ALMOs are monitoring at least 30 to 40% of their assets, this has not been achieved with Highways assets. However, now that staffing issues within the grounds maintenance team have been addressed, we would expect to see significant improvements in the future monitoring of Highway assets.
73. In accordance with the contract specification, all failures are to be rectified by the Contractor within 2 working days (rectification period) of notification being received. Any failures to rectify at the second monitoring visit will result in a performance deduction.
74. The ALMOs reported having a positive relationship with Continental, with the 'first time right' rates being at the highest levels (within the 90th percentile). However, it was noted that the Highway assets reported a higher number of failures, despite monitoring less assets.
75. We acknowledge that different specifications need to be achieved and that there is also a degree of subjectivity as part of the monitoring process. However, existing processes do need to be reviewed with the aim of achieving greater parity between the

ALMO and Highway monitoring processes.

76. Whilst the management and administration of the grounds maintenance contract has previously been done through the grounds maintenance team within Environmental Service, we welcome that this will now be carried out by the Parks and Countryside Service, enabling a full review of the efficacy and value for money of the monitoring processes in the light of the high level of service delivery being provided.

Recommendation 6

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods reviews the contract monitoring processes to identify efficiencies and consistency.

77. As part of its review in 2009, the former Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board recognised that local Parish and Town Councils also provided a valuable resource that needed to be maximised as part of the contract monitoring arrangements.
78. As mentioned previously, the current contract specification does recognise that the clients have a number of Registered Tenants Groups, Town and Parish Councils, Residents Panels and individual residents who may also be involved in the day to day monitoring of any work carried out in their respective areas. However, in relation to Parish and Town Councils in particular, we believe that more effort is needed to ensure that they



Conclusions and Recommendations

are proactively engaged in the contract monitoring process.

Recommendation 7
That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that Parish and Town Councils are proactively engaged in the contract monitoring process for the grounds maintenance contract.

Communication with Elected Members and the public.

79. The current contract specification states that the Contractor is required to periodically attend ALMO and BITMO Board meetings, Area Committees, Scrutiny and Executive Board and local residents meetings and any other meetings deemed necessary by the client.
80. We believe that Continental has been proactive in terms of communicating and connecting with services within the Council (for example Locality Management) as well as local resident and tenant groups. We welcome that Continental has also been quick to respond to any complaints and will seek to deal with issues promptly.
81. In moving forward, we do believe that more can still be done to improve communication links, particularly with Elected Members and the public.
82. As mentioned previously, a common complaint surrounding the grounds maintenance service is around grass arising not being collected, despite the fact that the collection of grass arisings has never featured in any Leeds Council grounds maintenance contract.
83. In recognising that many of the public complaints are received via the Council's Call Centre, it was recognised that staff at the Call Centre should be trained to respond effectively to such complaints by explaining what is actually expected from the grounds maintenance staff in accordance with the contract. We were pleased to note that this approach is being progressed by the Locality Managers.
84. We also recognised a need to periodically remind Elected Members of the expectations and work of the service and the management of the issues faced by Ward Members on a daily basis. Newly Elected Members should also be provided with the relevant background knowledge and contact information as part of their induction programme.
85. As well as helping the public to be more informed about what is expected from the grounds maintenance service, more effort is needed to also raise public awareness of behaviour that is obstructive to the delivery of a good quality grounds maintenance service (e.g. parking on public verges).
86. To achieve a grounds maintenance service that delivers value for money and best meets the needs of residents across the city, it is vital that we have the support of the public too.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendation 8

That the Chair of the Member Development Working Group includes grounds maintenance as part of the Member Development Programme and Induction Programme to promote greater awareness of the expectations of the grounds maintenance service in accordance with the contract.

Recommendation 9

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with the Area Management Teams to ensure that Area Committees receive regular updates regarding the performance of the grounds maintenance service delivered within their area. Such updates are to include an overview of key issues raised within their areas; how such issues have been dealt with; and any new or pending contract variations that will impact upon their area.

Recommendation 10

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with the Head of Communications and Marketing and the internal clients to develop a Communications Strategy aimed at promoting public awareness of behaviour that is obstructive to the delivery of a good quality grounds maintenance service (e.g. parking on public verges).



Desired Outcomes and Recommendation Summary

Desired Outcome – That necessary grounds maintenance work on miscellaneous grassed areas is scheduled immediately for action.

Recommendation 1 – That the Director of Resources and Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods establish a separate budget to enable the Grounds Maintenance Team to schedule immediate grounds maintenance work on miscellaneous grassed areas pending clarification of land ownership and formal allocation of future maintenance responsibility.

Desired Outcome – That the specification for grounds maintenance and shrub maintenance is fit for purpose in delivering a good quality service.

Recommendation 2 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with each of the internal clients to explore a move towards an extended shrub maintenance service (6 shrub visits) and a fortnightly grass cut frequency (16 cuts in one season) in order to achieve a better quality of service.

Desired Outcome – That the future use and maintenance of old shrub beds is determined in consultation with local Ward Members and relevant Parish and Town Councils.

Recommendation 3 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that asset holders consult with local Ward Members and relevant Parish and Town Councils on the future use and maintenance of old shrub beds.

Desired Outcome – That there is a joined up approach between the Council and Continental for undertaking litter picking services across the city.

Recommendation 4 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with the Head of Parks and Countryside, the internal clients, Locality Management and Continental to review existing litter picking responsibilities and opportunities for more joined up working.

That this review is undertaken immediately and an update report brought back to Scrutiny in January 2013.

Desired Outcome – Utilising available resources to obtain greater added value of service by Continental.

Recommendation 5 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods reviews where any additional services provided by Continental could lead to further cost savings, with particular attention given to potential winter operations.

That this review is undertaken immediately, with an update brought back to the Scrutiny Board in January 2013.



Desired Outcomes and Recommendation Summary

Desired Outcome – That contract monitoring is conducted efficiently and there is parity between the contract monitoring processes of the ALMOs and Highways.

Recommendation 6 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods reviews the contract monitoring processes to identify efficiencies and consistency.

Desired Outcome – That additional resources available within local Parish and Town Councils are maximised to add value to the contract monitoring arrangements.

Recommendation 7 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that Parish and Town Councils are proactively engaged in the contract monitoring process for the grounds maintenance contract.

Desired Outcome – That all Elected Members are fully aware of what is expected from the grounds maintenance service in accordance with the contract.

Recommendation 8 – That the Chair of the Member Development Working Group includes grounds maintenance as part of the Member Development Programme and Induction Programme to promote greater awareness of the expectations of the grounds maintenance service in accordance with the contract.

Desired Outcome – That Area Committees are regularly updated on the performance of the grounds maintenance service delivered within their area.

Recommendation 9 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with the Area Management Teams to ensure that Area Committees receive regular updates regarding the performance of the grounds maintenance service delivered within their area. Such updates are to include an overview of key issues raised within their areas; how such issues have been dealt with; and any new or pending contract variations that will impact upon their area.

Desired Outcome – That public behaviour does not obstruct the delivery of a good quality grounds maintenance service.

Recommendation 10 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works with the Head of Communications and Marketing and the internal clients to develop a Communications Strategy aimed at promoting public awareness of behaviour that is obstructive to the delivery of a good quality grounds maintenance service (e.g. parking on public verges).



Evidence

Monitoring arrangements

Standard arrangements for monitoring the outcome of the Board's recommendations will apply.

The decision-makers to whom the recommendations are addressed will be asked to submit a formal response to the recommendations, including an action plan and timetable, normally within two months.

Following this the Scrutiny Board will determine any further detailed monitoring, over and above the standard quarterly monitoring of all scrutiny recommendations.

Reports and Publications Submitted

Report of the Chief Officer for Parks and Countryside – Grounds Maintenance Update. 1st August 2012.

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development - summary of the working group meeting held on 1st August 2012. 10th September 2012.

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development – summary of the working group meeting held on 1st October 2012. 22nd October 2012.



Evidence

Witnesses Heard

Councillor Mark Dobson, Executive Board Member for Environment
Councillor Paul Wadsworth, Leeds City Council (LCC)
Nick Broad, Operations Director, Continental
Mark McLaughlin, Operations Manager, Continental
Helen Freeman, Chief Officer, Environmental Action, LCC
Sean Flesher, Head of Parks and Countryside, LCC
Simon Frosdick, Business Development Manager, Parks and Countryside, LCC
Giles Jeffs, Contracts Manager, Grounds Maintenance Hub Team, LCC
Steve Smith, Environmental Services, LCC
Clare Warren, Chief Executive of West North West Homes Leeds
Simon Costigan, Chief Executive of Aire Valley Homes Leeds
Wayne Shirt, Contracts Manager, Aire Valley Homes Leeds
Steven Vowels, Head of Partnerships & Support Services, East North East Homes Leeds
John Woolmer, Locality Manager, East North East Leeds, LCC
Tom Smith, Locality Manager, South and Outer East Leeds, LCC

Dates of Scrutiny

Scrutiny Working Group Meeting – 1st August 2012
Scrutiny Board Meeting – 10th September 2012
Scrutiny Working Group Meeting – 1st October 2012
Scrutiny Board Meeting – 22nd October 2012

Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities)
Review of the new grounds maintenance contract
12th November 2012
Report author: Angela Brogden



www.scrutiny.unit@leeds.gov.uk